

Divine Presence Above the Pillow

הַנִּכְנֵס לְבִקֵּר אֶת הַחֹלֶה לֹא יֵשֵׁב לֹא עַל גְּבִי מִטָּה וְלֹא עַל גְּבִי
כִּסֵּא, אֲלָא מִתְעִיֵּף יוֹשֵׁב לְפָנָיו, מִפְּנֵי שְׂשֻׁכִּינָה לְמַעַלָּה
מִרְאֲשׁוֹתָיו שֶׁל חוֹלֶה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "ה' יִסְעֲדֵנוּ עַל עֶרְשׁ דְּוֵי."

One who visits the sick should not sit on the bed or sit on a chair (while the sick one lies on a pallet on the floor). Rather, the visitor should wrap himself reverently and sit before the one who is sick because the Divine Presence is above the pillow of the sick, as it is said: *The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed* (Psalm 41:4).

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 12b

A later document clarifies the Talmud text in ways that have been inserted in parentheses above:

When the sick lies on the ground, a visitor should not sit on a chair higher than the sick because the Divine Presence is above the head of the sick, as it is said: *The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed* (Psalm 41:4). But if the sick is lying on a raised bed it is permissible to sit on a chair or stool.

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